

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 1889

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, UR
SUBJECT: RECENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENTS AND RUMORS

1. SUMMARY. RECENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENTS INCLUDE A NEW RUMOR ABOUT KOSYGIN'S SICKNESS LAST SUMMER; A RUMOR ABOUT GROMYKO'S HEALTH; SEVERAL STORIES INVOLVING ANDROPOV AND THE METRO BOMBING; AND A NEW EXPLANATION FOR BREZHNEV'S TRIP TO TULA. END SUMMARY.

2. AFP CORRESPONDENT IN MOSCOW RECENTLY TOLD US THAT AFP HAD ESTABLISHED TO ITS OWN SATISFACTION THAT WHILE KOSYGIN IN FACT SUFFERED A HEART ATTACK LAST SUMMER, IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH HIS ALLEGED "BOATING ACCIDENT." AFP BELIEVES KOSYGIN'S HEART ATTACK OCCURRED WHILE HE WAS UNDERGOING AN OPERATION TO REMOVE THE LARGE SPOT ON THE LEFT SIDE OF HIS FACE. IN ANY CASE, RECENT TV SHOTS OF KOSYGIN'S FACE INDICATE THAT THE SPOT HAS DISAPPEARED.

3. OUR COLLEAGUES IN THE FRG EMBASSY HAVE HEARD THAT GROMYKO HAS BEEN OUT OF ACTION FOR THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS BECAUSE OF A SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEM, PERHAPS A "HEART OR CIRCULATORY PROBLEM". OUR RECORDS SHOW
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GROMYKO'S LAST APPEARANCE TO HAVE BEEN ON JANUARY 19, WHEN HE WAS AMONG THE OFFICIAL PARTY GREETING BREZHNEV UPON HIS RETURN FROM TULA.

4. ACCORDING TO WESTERN NEWSMEN HERE, UNOFFICIAL SOVIET SOURCES ARE OFFERING SEVERAL STORIES ABOUT THE METRO BOMBING AND KGB CHIEF ANDROPOV;

--ANDROPOV HIMSELF WAS BEHIND THE EXPLOSION,
BECAUSE HE WANTED TO POSITION HIMSELF TO ARGUE FOR A
MORE POWERFUL KGB FOLLOWING BREZHNEV'S PASSING FROM
THE POLITICAL SCENE;
--THE BOMBING WAS PERPETRATED BY AN ANTI-ANDROPOV
FACTION IN THE KGB IN ORDER TO WEAKEN HIS POSITION;
--BREZHNEV WAS SO UPSET BY THE BOMBING THAT HE
SUMMONED ANDROPOV AND CHEWED HIM OUT FOR OVER 30
MINUTES, ALONG THE LINES THAT "IT'S A HELL OF A WAY
TO KICK OFF THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR" (THIS FROM A
USUALLY RELIABLE SOVIET SOURCE, WHO PASSED ALONG AN
ACCURATE ACCOUNT OF THE YAGODKIN OUSTER SEVERAL WEEKS
BEFORE THE STORY WAS OUT).

5. THE SOURCE OF THE RUMOR ABOUT BREZHNEV AND ANDROPOV
ALSO SAID HE HAD "THE TRUE FACTS" ABOUT WHY BREZHNEV
WENT TO TULA:

--WORKERS IN TWO TULA FACTORIES REFUSED TO ACCEPT
THEIR PAY ENVELOPES ON THE GROUNDS THAT THERE WAS
NOTHING TO BUY WITH THE MONEY; NONETHELESS, THEY
CONTINUED TO WORK NORMALLY, WITHOUT A SLOWDOWN OR
WALKOUT;
--THE POLITBURO'S RESPONSE WAS TO DECLARE TULA
A HERO CITY AND TO PROVIDE THE CITY WITH BETTER SUPPLIES.
(THERE IS A DEGREE OF PLAUSIBILITY TO THIS ACCOUNT: THE
HERO-CITY AWARD SEEMED TO BE CONNECTED TO NO PARTICULAR
EVENT OR ANNIVERSARY; AND THE FIRST PART OF BREZHNEV'S
SPEECH IN TULA REFERRED DIRECTLY TO COMPLAINTS THAT
THERE WAS LITTLE ON THE SHELVES OF TULA'S STORES.)
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YM IN THE TIDBIT DEPARTMENT:

--NEWLY APPOINTED CC SECRETARIAT MEMBER RYABOV
WAS PRESENT AT A JANUARY 25 DOSAAF MEETING, THE FIRST
APPEARANCE LINKING HIM WITH MILITARY AFFAIRS AND THUS
GIVING SOME CREDENCE TO THE THEORY THAT HE HAS TAKEN
OVER, AT LEAST PARTIALLY, USTINOV'S FORMER RESPONSIBILITIES
IN THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL FIELD;
--KIRILENKO'S PORTFOLIO SEEMED TO EXPAND A BIT
WITH HIS JANUARY 24 SPEECH AT A CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING
DEVOTED TO SOVIET MEDIA COVERAGE OF DOMESTIC ECONOMIC
MATTERS.
TOON

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